



**City of Atlanta  
Office of Buildings**

**CODE INTERPRETATIONS**

**INTERPRETATION #**

2018-IRC-0003

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

06/21/2018

**REVISION DATE:**

**PAGE #**

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**AUTHOR:**

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Chief Building Official

**REVISION #:**

## **CODE INTERPRETATION:**

### **Projections adjacent to Townhome property lines**

#### **1. SCOPE / PURPOSE**

- 1.1. The intent of the interpretation is to clarify the 2012 International Residential Building Code requirements for projections and accessory structures attached to townhomes. Specifically, the projections and accessory structures that are parallel to the property line that extends through the common wall or walls between these attached Townhomes, which encroach into the fire separation distance measured from the property line.
- 1.2. In addition, this binding Code Interpretation, to projects submitted to the City of Atlanta, is meant to provide consistency between the City of Atlanta Office of Building staff and registered design professionals that provide construction documents to the City of Atlanta and multiple jurisdictions throughout Georgia, and at a national level.
- 1.3. This Code Interpretation is not meant to limit or remove the authority of the Chief Building Official to accept and review alternate methods of design to address the prescriptive requirements of the 2012 International Residential Building Code.

#### **2. ADOPTED CODE**

- 2.1. **2012 International Residential Code Section R201.3 Terms defined in other codes.** Where terms are not defined in this code such terms shall have meanings ascribed to them as in other code publications on the International Code Council.
- 2.2. **2012 International Residential Code Section R201.4 Terms not defined.** Where terms are defined through the methods authorized by this section, such terms shall have ordinarily accepted meanings such as the context applies.
- 2.3. **2012 International Building Code Section 706.5.2 Horizontal Projecting Elements.** Fire walls shall extend to the outer edge of horizontal projecting elements such as balconies, roof overhangs, canopies, marquees and similar projects that are within 4 feet of the fire wall.
- 2.4. **2012 International Residential Code Section R302.1 Exterior Walls.** Construction, projections, openings and penetrations of exterior walls of dwellings and accessory buildings shall comply with Table R302.1(1); or dwellings equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with NFPA 13D shall comply with Table R302.1(2).

**Exceptions:**

1. Walls, projections, openings or penetrations in walls perpendicular to the line used to determine the fire separation distance.



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2. Walls of dwellings and accessory structures located on the same lot.
3. Detached tool sheds and storage sheds, playhouses and similar structures exempted from permits are not required to provide wall protection based on location on the lot. Projections beyond the exterior wall shall not extend over the lot line.
4. Detached garages accessory to a dwelling located within 2 feet (610 mm) of a lot line are permitted to have roof eave projections not exceeding 4 inches (102 mm).
5. Foundation vents installed in compliance with this code are permitted.

- 2.5. 2012 International Residential Code Section R302.2 Townhouses. As amended by the State of Georgia.** Each townhouse shall be considered a separate building and shall be separated by fire-resistance-rated wall assemblies meeting the requirements of Section R302.1 for exterior walls.

**Exception:**

A common 2-hour fire-resistance-rated wall assembly tested in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263 is permitted for townhouses, if such walls do not contain plumbing or mechanical equipment, ducts or vents in the cavity of the common wall. The wall shall be rated for fire exposure from both sides and shall extend to and be tight against exterior walls and the underside of the roof sheathing. Electrical installations shall be installed in accordance with the National Electrical Code (NEC). Penetrations of electrical outlet boxes shall be in accordance with Section R302.4.

- 2.6. 2012 International Residential Code Section R302.2.1 Continuity.**

The fire-resistance-rated wall or assembly separating *townhouses* shall be continuous from the foundation to the underside of the roof sheathing, deck or slab. The fire-resistance rating shall extend the full length of the wall or assembly, including wall extensions through and separating attached enclosed *accessory structures*.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1.** Section R302 of the 2012 International Residential Building Code provides the prescriptive requirements for fire resistant construction. More specifically it provides the requirements for exterior walls for townhouses.
- 3.2.** Due to the variety of opinions how the separation is required by the registered design professionals regarding the requirements for projecting elements that are within the fire separation distance parallel to the required fire separations of townhouses, this interpretation provides the codes, explanations, and method of compliance.
- 3.3.** Fire separation distances are always measured to a property line or imaginary property line, which in the case of townhomes is located within the center of the common wall between these attached single family dwellings.



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**4. INTREPRETATION / CLARIFICATION**

- 4.1.** The 2012 International Residential Building Code states within Section R201.3 and R201.4 that when terms are not defined in this code one may look to other publications published by the ICC (International Code Council) for definitions or ascribe common accepted meanings to undefined terms.
- 4.2.** The 2012 International Buildings Code defines within Section 706.5.2 that a horizontal projecting elements are balconies, roof overhangs, canopies, marquees, and similar projections. Since, a deck is similar in construction and aesthetically to a balcony; a deck will be defined as horizontal projecting element, or more simply a projection.
- 4.3.** The 2012 International Residential Building Code states within Section R302.2 that the separation between each townhouse unit is treated and considered separate buildings, where it requires each townhouse unit to have a one-hour fire-resistance rated exterior wall based on the fire separation distance between the individual townhouse units. The exception for this section has been amended by the State of Georgia and provides the option of a common 2-hour fire resistance rated wall assembly test in accordance with ASTM E 119 or UL 263 as long as this wall does not contain plumbing or mechanical equipment. Also, the wall must be rated for fire exposure from both sides and be tight against exterior wall and the underside of roof sheathing.
- 4.4.** The 2012 International Residential Building Code states within Section R302.1 that any projections beyond the exterior walls must also comply with the requirements of Section R302.1, including Table R302.1 (1) and (2).
- 4.5.** A deck, defined as or similar to a balcony, having a fire separation distance between 2'-0" (two feet) to 3'-0" (three feet) must be 1-hour rated on the underside if the building is equipped with an approved automatic sprinkler system, or between 2'-0" (two feet) to 5'-0" (five feet) for buildings without an approved automatic sprinkler system. SEE FIGURE 4.6



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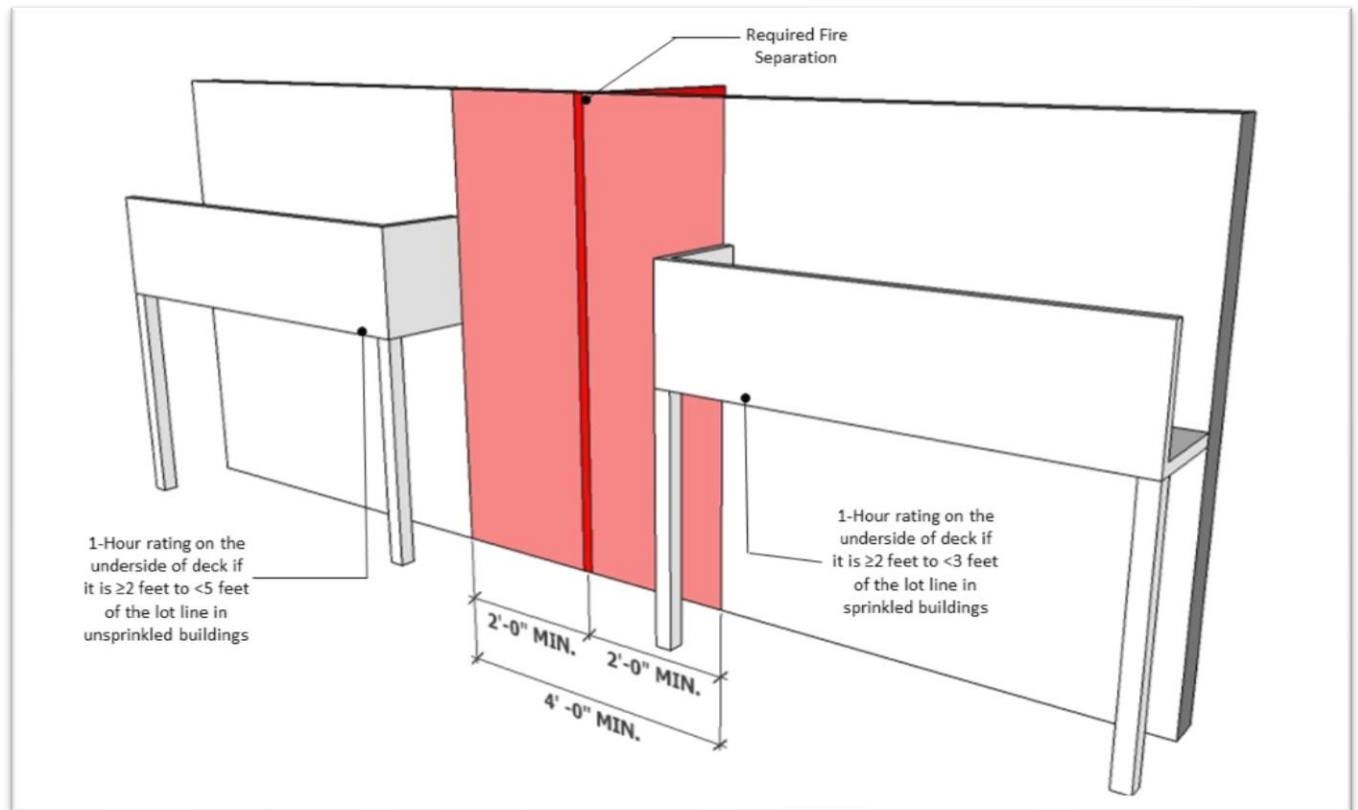
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**FIGURE 4.6**



- 4.6.** 2012 International Residential Building Code Tables R302.1(1) and (2) both state a deck, balcony or any other projections are not allowed where the fire separation distance is less than 2 feet unless it complies with 4.7. below.
- 4.7.** A minimum of 4'-0" (four feet) shall be maintained between the two (02) decks or balconies. The balconies shall be protected by the fire resistance separation required by 2012 International Residential Code Section R302.2, as amended by the State of Georgia. This protection may be either two (02) 1-hour fire resistance rated exterior walls, or one (01) common 2-hour fire resistance rated wall complying with the exception in Section R302.2 extending to the outer edge of the balcony and complying with the requirements for continuity of 2012 International Residential Code Building Section R302.2.1. (SEE FIGURE 4.6 & 4.7).
- 4.8.** A minimum of 4'-0" (four feet) shall be maintained between the two (02) balconies. The balconies shall be protected by the fire resistance separation required by 2012 International Residential Building Code Section R302.2, as amended by the State of Georgia. This protection may be either two (02) 1-hour fire resistance rated exterior walls, or one (01) common 2-hour fire resistance rated wall complying with the exception in Section R302.2 extending



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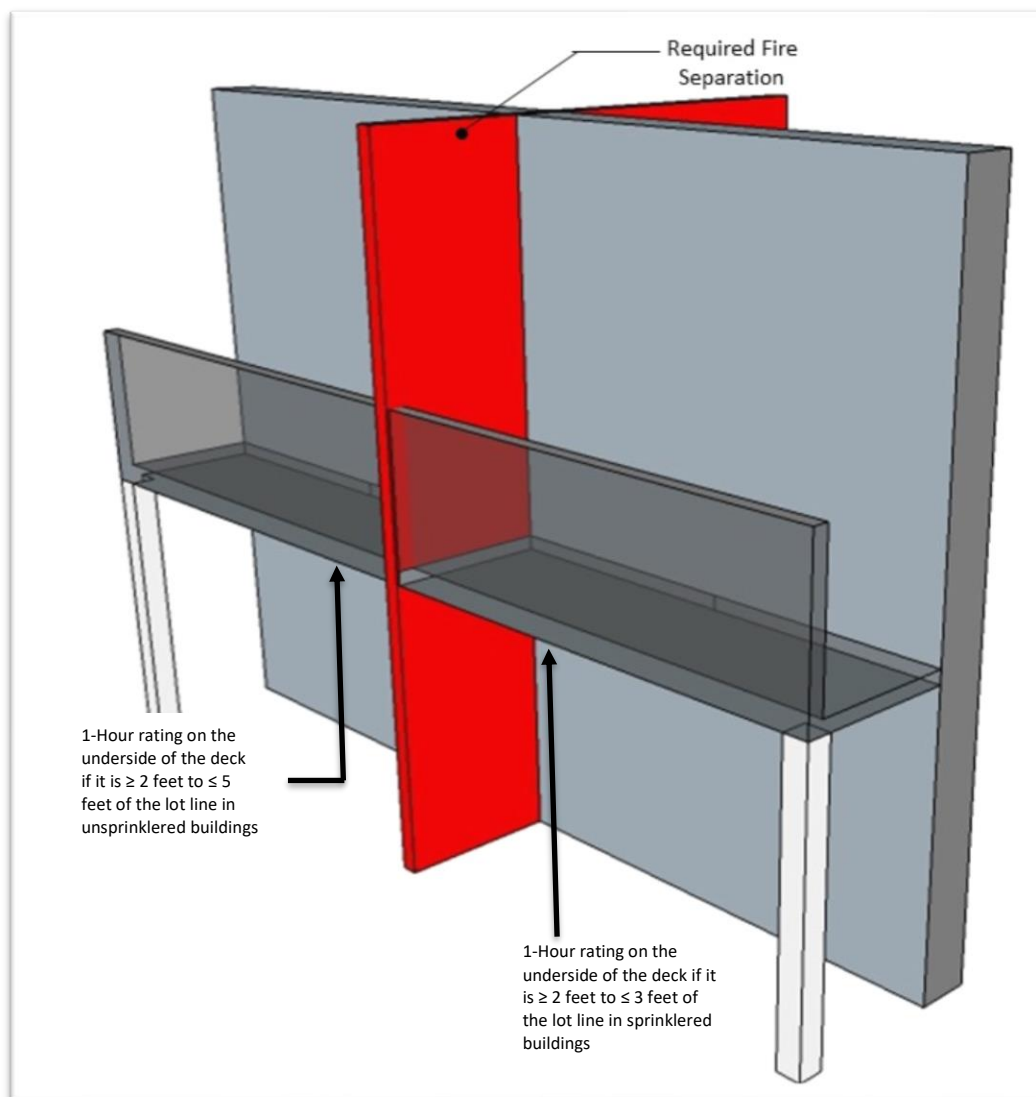
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to the outer edge of the deck or balcony and complying with the requirements for continuity of 2012 International Residential Code Section R302.2.1. (SEE FIGURE 4.6 & 4.7).

**FIGURE 4.7**  
SUMMATION



- 5.1** The intent behind the fire separation distance is to minimize the spread of fire. This may occur from heat exposure occurring during a fire event in a adjacent attached dwelling (townhome), projection or attached accessory structure.



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- 5.2** The prescriptive requirements of Sections R302.1 and R302.2 of the 2012 International Residential Building Code allow for horizontal projections to be adjacent to the fire separation required for townhomes.
- 5.3** No projections are allowed within 4'-0" (four feet) of the required fire separations unless separated per the requirements of Section R302.2 and R302.2.1. Projections that comply with the distances of Tables R302.1(1) and (2) must be rated at 1-hour on the underside of the projection.

**END**